(c) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reported that resident individuals maintaining a foreign currency account with an authorised dealer in India or a bank abroad, as permissible under extant Foreign Exchange Regulations, are free to obtain International Credit Cards issued by overseas banks and other reputed agencies. The charges incurred against the card either in India or abroad, can be met out of funds held in such foreign currency account(s) of the card holder or through remittances, if any, from India only through a bank where the cardholder has a current or savings account.The remittance for this purpose, should also be made directly to the card-issuing agency abroad, and not to a third party.

Expenditure incurred by Ministries

†1702. SHRI ABHAY KANT PRASAD: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it has been observed that various Ministries/ Departments spend most of the funds only in the month of March of each financial year instead of spending it according to the prescribed procedure; and

(b) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to make sure the observance of procedure/rules strictly in this regard and the minimise the avoidable wasteful expenditure?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) An analysis of the trend of expenditure for the last three years shows that more than 20% of the expenditure is incurred by a few Ministries/Departments in the month of March alone.

(b) All the Ministries/Departments have been advised to exercise a monthly check on the flow of expenditure in respect of each Demand for Grant to avoid rush of expenditure during the closing month of financial year.

SLR bonds through KPFC

1703. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether the Government of Kerala has sought the permission of Central Government for the issue of SLR bonds through the Kerala Power Finance Corporation which is the joint entrepreneur of the State Government and the Kerala State Electricity Board;

(b) whether Government would consider to include the KPFC in the approved market borrowing programme list of the Central Government;

(c) whether Government would grant exemptions to KPFC of condition (ii) and (iii) of the schedule 6 and 7 relating to NRI deposits; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Decision will be taken in consultation with Reserve Bank of India.

Growth of health insurance sector

1704. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the anticipated growth of health insurance sector in another five years from the present 2002-03 premium amount of Rs. 1,000 crores;

(b) what is the share of the private sector companies in the health insurance sector and whether present measures are adequate to safeguard the interests of policy holders in the private sector; and

(c) whether there is any perceptible difference between the timeframe of settlement of claims by the State-owned and private companies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) has reported that the health insurance premium may go upto Rs. 1,600 crores in the next five years.

(b) The share of private sector general insurance companies is approximately 9% of the total health insurance premium. IRDA has reported that the safeguards envisaged to protect the interests of policy holders are adequate.